

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Is it Strange to Write about an Archangel? Possibly Not - An Opinion

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Abstract

In the monotheistic religions, archangels play an important role as heralds and realizers of God's will. Archangel Michael is particularly important for Europe. This can be seen, among other things, in the shrines dedicated to him. There is the idea of a straight line that runs across Europe and connects seven Michael shrines (1). This is no coincidence. The translation of the name Michael is: "Who is like God?". On the one hand, this implies the splitting off of the high angel Lucifer, and on the other, the call to people to overcome the Luciferian in themselves and become Divine again. This includes freedom, wisdom and love.

Introduction

Since we are - at least in the Western world - in a secular, materialistic age, the significance of religious ideas such as archangels seems to be of lesser importance. However, we should bear in mind that the very active Islam goes back to revelations of the archangel Gabriel to the prophet Mohammed, which are summarized in the Koran (2). The ideas of the Israeli political right are also based on Old Testament statements by prophets that seem to be having an effect today (3). As far as Europe, and Central Europe in particular, is

concerned, it is certainly the Archangel Michael who enjoys the highest veneration. Rudolf Steiner expert Axel Burkart speaks of a Michaelic age that began in 1879 (4,5). It is therefore of interest to know what can be said about this.

Amazingly, seven important Christian shrines line up like pearls on an invisible, straight string (1). It stretches from northwest to southeast across Europe. The almost five thousand kilometer long line is shrouded in mysterious lore (Fig. 1).

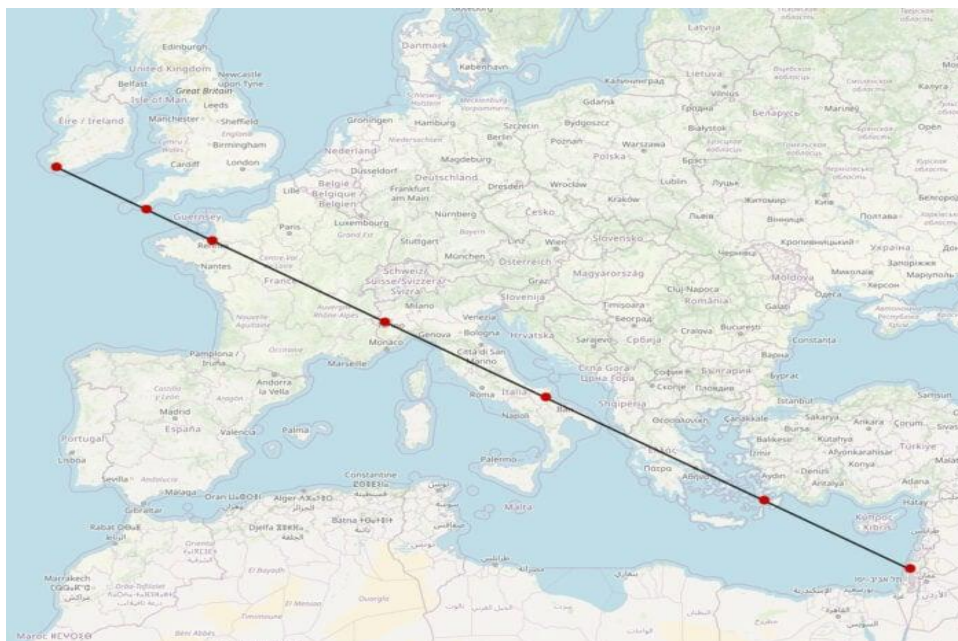


Figure 1, The seven Michael shrines on the "Holy Line". Graphic: Sabine Weigert

It is called the "Sword of the Archangel" or the "Holy Line". According to ancient tradition, it traces the thrust of the heavenly weapon that hurled the apostate angel Lucifer down from heaven into the depths in a cosmic and gigantic battle before all time (Fig.2). An event that is also reported in the famous Revelation of John in the New Testament (7).

Pride comes before a fall

Out of arrogance, vanity and excessive pride, Lucifer, once a "bearer of light" and a magnificent being of light, had turned against the Creator of all

things and creatures and thus against his own Creator. With the disastrous "Non serviam" (I do not serve), he had - arrogantly exalting himself - opposed the will of God. He wanted his own universe.

The answer to this megalomania is called out to him by the archangel Michael who pushes him victoriously into the abyss. According to Old Testament tradition, "Who is like God?" are said to have been the last words Lucifer hears as he and his followers, transformed into demons, plunge into remoteness from God and darkness.



Figure 2, The angel's fall

Faithful messenger of God

In Hebrew, "Mi Kamocha Elohim", the triumphant exclamation also becomes the name of the calling, steadfastly faithful being of light that serves the divine will: "Mi-Ka-El". From then on, the Archangel Michael, the mighty instrument of his Creator, appears again and again as the faithful, powerful and combative messenger of his Lord in the history of salvation.

It unfolds the Creator's relationship with human beings, who are endowed with freedom of will out of infinite love. As a servant of God, Michael respects people's God-given freedom of will. However, at the behest of God, he also intervenes time and again after people have made wrong decisions.

It is his blazing flaming sword that shows Adam and Eve, who have decided against God and in favor of the whisperings of Lucifer, the way out of paradise. He is most likely also the angel who protects the righteous but seemingly defenceless Daniel from the lions that are to tear him apart in the lions' den on the orders of a Mesopotamian king.

Michael protects all those who rely on and trust in God. According to biblical tradition, he will also be the one who conscientiously weighs good and bad thoughts, words and deeds against each other with the scales of the soul before each individual makes a righteous judgment of themselves.

Worship of early Christians

Even the early Christians revered the unwavering reliability and faithfulness of the light-filled

warrior of God and helper of souls. The first shrines dedicated to Michael were therefore built just a few centuries after the birth of Christ. In 314 AD, Emperor Constantine had a basilica built for the archangel in Constantinople. Fourteen more shrines to St. Michael followed in the city on the Bosphorus over the centuries.

As early as 493, Pope Gelasius I set the feast of the Archangel and his heavenly hosts, which is still celebrated today, on September 29. They and other early Christian shrines to the archangel perished in the turmoil of war. However, many others were built following their example.

Seven sacred places

It may seem like a coincidence that seven of the most important places are lined up on an invisible straight line between Ireland and Israel. However, the fact that this almost 5,000-kilometre-long line is precisely aligned with the sunset of the northern hemisphere's summer solstice is astonishing.

Point 1: The most north-westerly point of the mysterious line lies on the Irish monastery island of **Skellig Michael**. The rugged, barren cliffs of the small island, surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, are 12 kilometers from the Irish peninsula of Iveragh (Fig. 3).

For 600 years, from the 7th to the 13th century, Christian monks lived here in the greatest seclusion, poverty and asceticism. They placed their monastery under the protection of the archangel Michael. Like him, they wanted nothing more than to serve their Creator unconditionally. From time to time, however, monks would set out, travel to Europe and spread Christianity there.



Figure 3, Skellig Michael Island/Ireland: "Beehive Monasteries".

Even after the monks left the island in the 13th century due to the increasingly cold climate and settled on the mainland, Skellig Michael Island with its archaic stone monastery buildings remained an important spiritual place - to this day.

Point 2: About 400 kilometers away as the crow flies, **St. Michael's Mount** rises a hundred meters off the coast of Cornwall. At low tide, it can be reached on foot via a narrow stone causeway that is flooded at high tide (Fig. 4).



Figure 4, Mount Saint Michael off the coast of England. Photo: Giuseppe Milo, CC BY 3.0

The archangel Michael is said to have appeared to some fishermen in this lonely place around the year 500. An early medieval monastery in honor of the heavenly helper and warrior followed,

which became the destination of many pilgrims over the centuries.

Point 3: Mont-Saint-Michel. Around 400 kilometers away, across the English Channel, an

astonishingly similar rocky island attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and travellers year after year: the world-famous Mont-Saint-Michel in the Normandy Wadden Sea (Fig. 5).

Mont-Saint-Michel is one of France's most famous landmarks and is on the UNESCO World Heritage List.



Figure 5, Mont Saint Michel off the coast of France. Photo: Xantana/iStock

In 708, Michael is said to have appeared here to Bishop Aubert of Avranches and asked him to build a sanctuary. From the 8th century onwards, the unique Benedictine abbey, surrounded by the sea, was built. The former monastery still characterizes the image and spiritual aura of Mont

Saint Michel today.

Point 4: Sacra di San Michele. 1000 kilometers south-east of Mount Michael in northern France, monks still live and pray today - in the Sacra di San Michele.

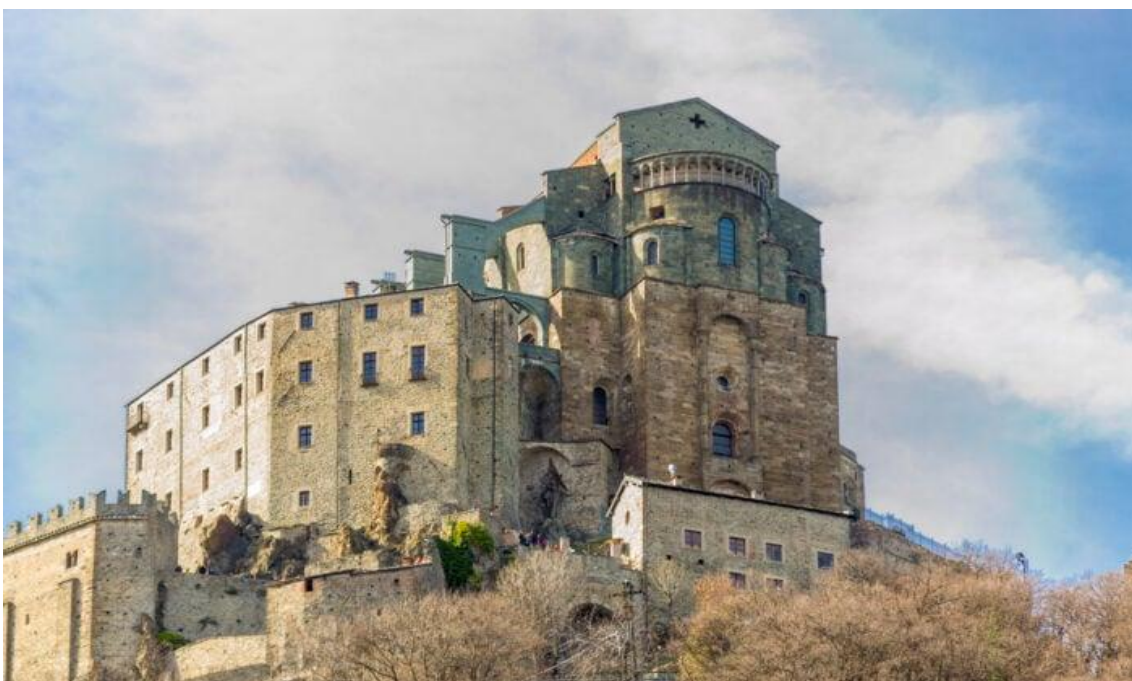


Figure 6, Sacra di San Michele, Piedmont, Italy, Photo: StefyMorelli/iStock

At the entrance to the Susa Valley, its mighty stone building rises on the summit of Mount Pirchiriano against the backdrop of the Piedmont Alps. Situated at a strategic point, the abbey is a symbol of Piedmont. (Fig. 6) The hermitage of an archbishop who retreated here in the 10th century developed into an important monastery thanks to the foundation of a count. Under the protection and patronage of the archangel, the sanctuary still radiates the deep power of Christian mysticism today.

Point 5: Santuario San Michele Arcangelo. The sanctuary in Piedmont and the no less impressive Santuario San Michele Arcangelo in Apulia in southern Italy are separated by around 1,000 kilometers. However, they are also connected by the archangel and the mysterious line of his sword stroke.

Here on Monte Sant'Angelo in the Gargano mountains, it is not a monastery, but a cave where pilgrims worship God and his faithful servant. (Fig. 7)



Figure 7, Statue of Archangel Michael in the shrine of the grotto church of San Michele Arcangelo. Apulia, Italy. Photo: font83/iStock

Around the year 490 AD, the archangel is said to have appeared here several times. He expressed the wish that the cave should become a holy place. The cave church and the basilica above it thus became the first Michael shrine in Western Europe.

Christians have been coming here to pray in St. Michael's Grotto ever since. Among them was St. Francis in 1216, who stopped to pray at the entrance to the cave out of reverence for the sanctity of the place. To show his devotion, he reverently kissed a stone and painted a small cross on it.

Point 6: Monastery of Panormitis. From Monte Sant'Angelo, a straight line of more than 1,200 kilometers leads to the monastery of Panormitis on the Greek island of Syri. Its history dates back to the 6th century. Legend has it that it began with an icon of the archangel, which an islander found in a mastic bush near the coast and brought into her house. However, the icon does not want to stay here. Miraculously, it keeps returning to the place of its discovery. Finally, Michael appears to the perplexed woman in a dream and explains to her that the place where the icon was found is to become the devotional image's permanent home. (Fig. 8)



Figure 8, The Archangel Michael Monastery on the promenade of the village of Panormitis in Symi, Greece. Photo: Kati Lenart/iStock

A chapel is now built for the icon. It became the original cell of the large monastery, which is still an important Greek Orthodox pilgrimage site today. The monastery church still houses the highly venerated and miraculous icon of St. Michael.

Point 7: Carmelite monastery on Mount Carmel. Finally, the south-easternmost end point of the Holy Line is a monastery on Mount Carmel in Israel. This is where the Old Testament prophet Elijah is said to have put an end to the worship of pagan idols through his unshakeable trust in God. A ray of fire from heaven shows the acceptance of Elijah's offerings and thus proves the existence of God to the Israelites.

Towards the end of the 12th century, crusaders and Jerusalem pilgrims settled in the Carmel Mountains as hermits. They were drawn away from the noise and violence of the crusades into solitude and silence, in order to hear the quiet voice of God and discover his ways. These hermits then joined together to form a religious community.

At their request, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Albert of Vercelli, set down the first rule of the order in writing in 1214. The core of the rule is to meditate

on the law of God day and night and to keep watch in prayer.

Throughout its history, the Carmelite Order, not least through its saints (e.g. Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, Edith Stein), has made important contributions to a Christian spirituality that has offered and continues to offer guidance to many people.

Even today, the Carmelite Order, which is spread throughout the world, lives from its characteristic unity of contemplation and action, "standing before God". This means the passionate search for the loving presence of God in the concrete here and now, together with all those who want to discover and experience his loving and healing closeness in their lives. (Fig. 9)

The word Carmel, which can be translated as "fertile garden", was already used in biblical times as a symbol of the beauty and abundance of life that comes from God. The mountain has attracted believers since ancient times. The Essenes, for example, had their large monastery here before the birth of Jesus (8,9), the Bahá'í (10) have their center a few kilometers away, and the Druze still live there (11).

In the Song of Songs, which has been taken up

again and again in the Carmel tradition to depict the love relationship between God and man, the lover compares the head of his beloved to the beauty of Carmel (Song of Songs 7:6). And the

prophet Isaiah promises the parched land the "splendor of Carmel" and thus abundant fertility (Isaiah 35:2).



Figure: 9 Carmelite Monastery on Mount Carmel, Israel.

There is an important branch: the Carmel Monastery in Mayerling/Austria - a "place of atonement". The monastery was founded by Emperor Franz Joseph I in 1889 following the tragic death of his son, Crown Prince Rudolf. He advocated giving the Balkan states their autonomy, which could have prevented the First World War.

Archangel Michael does not appear explicitly in Carmel; he is represented by the prophet Elijah (12:13). "God is my Lord", the meaning of Elijah's name, his courage and his trust in God are a joyful response to the archangel's cry "Who is like God?". The significance of the mysterious sword of the archangel Michael and his saints will probably become clear in the coming years, as the present day, especially in Europe, is characterized by an intense conflict between different views and goals.

We Live in the Age of Michael

The name Michael therefore means: "Who is like God? The name of the patron saint of Central Europe holds the secret of self-discovery, which has to do with the choice of our role models. And

the myth of St. Michael holds a treasure trove of wisdom. But myths from times long past contain insights that are often forgotten without people realizing how important they can be for the present (14,15).

The Christian faith teaches that God created angels in the first place, but that some of these angels became rebellious and turned away from God. Michael defeated the leader of the rebellion and expelled him from "heaven". As their vibration diminished, the renegades became more and more material and therefore more human. Since then, there has been a battle for people's souls between light and darkness. And: The life of Christians is a life of spiritual struggle for the decision (16,17).

The archangel Michael leads the heavenly hosts, which is why he needs a sword, and according to the Book of Revelation he leads the battle against Satan and thus protects people. There is a hierarchy (not a democracy) in the world of angels. Esoteric angelology speaks of nine angelic levels. The angels at the highest level - the seraphim - are the most powerful and are closest

to God.

Who is like God?

It is a rhetorical question. Because we were all created - initially as angels - in the image of God and have the spark of Christ within us. God is not outside of us, but within us. So we are like God, only: we often don't live with it or according to it.

Would an angel succumb to egotism or even narcissism? That is unlikely. It is more conceivable that an angel who descends to humans would perceive the gap between himself and his surroundings. Suddenly he would realize that he is surrounded by a nameless reality that stands in contrast to the purity of creation. Compassion and kindness would grow in him.

"He who sees things as they are, and not as they are called or even praised, is truly wise and has learned more from God than from men," said Thomas a Kempis (21).

Role Models

The question "Who is like God?" plays a role in everyone's life at some point, because it involves the question: "Who am I? What am I like? and: Who do I want to be? Although it is a social reflex to orient oneself towards role models, the question of one's points of orientation is likely to cause one to falter. People of faith often answer more clearly and quickly. Christians, for example, want to develop and strengthen the love of Christ within themselves. Buddhists, like Buddha, want to be free from greed. But why do we find it difficult to find a guiding figure?

Do we still need role models in today's virtual ego cult? Do we perhaps need support in orientation management? The search for answers usually begins in childhood, with our roots and the role models we were given back then. But schools, universities, governments, global players, social media and other organizations have an interest in shaping our role models and imprinting patterns on us. Unfortunately, they have a considerable influence on how we want to be.

Self-realization

Everyone is directly or indirectly forced into roles in the course of their lives. The American psychologist Carl Rogers dealt with personality theory (18,19,20). According to this theory, people strive for self-actualization. According to

his concept, self-discovery can be divided into three sub-categories:

1. our self-esteem: how we think about ourselves,
2. Self-image: how we see ourselves
3. our ideal self: how we want to be.

Roger's hypothesis states that everyone can change their basic attitudes and behavior. However, this requires suitable role models. Only by visualizing what one could become is it possible to bring about a profound change. The world of myths and fairy tales offers us many role models.

As soon as we realize the gap between what we are and what we could be, the transformation to what we should be begins. Hidden in the meaning of the name Michael is the message to set out on the path of our destiny: to participate in the "homecoming work" of Jesus Christ and ultimately to become divine again (22).

Conclusions

Man is therefore destined to become divine again. The knowledge of his divine part lies hidden and wants to be raised. But by fostering the following three divine qualities, we will make progress in our self-realization (23):

1. Freedom. God is free and gave His children free will. So we also strive to be free. The feeling of freedom arises as soon as our actions are in harmony with the universe, with God. The bond with God makes us free. Only the longing to align one's life with the divine can shake off the shackles of bondage and constraints.

2. Insight and Wisdom. They are closely linked to ethics. It is also not a superficial thing to feel true understanding and to shape one's path with wisdom. It is a deep insight into the workings of the cosmos and the ability to be in harmony with it. The Old Testament says: "He who hates me loves death." (Proverbs 8:36)

3. Love and Compassion. They create peace. A counter question would be: How could we believe we see the beauty of all creation if we did not know how to love? Only when divine love comes from the heart can we give without taking. Becoming like God would reveal other aspects of the cosmos such as interconnectedness, complexity and unconditionality.

The path of change sometimes seems difficult, but let us not forget that divine beings always and unconditionally give us true love. When we turn to Michael, an important representative of the Divine, we receive support and help to rediscover ourselves. A quote from Augustine: "We must love our neighbor either because he is good or so that he may become good." *Aurelius Augustine (354 - 430), Bishop of Hippo Regius (24)*.

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